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Let us be very clear about what we will be told today by the President.

We will be told that adequate progress has been made in some areas of Iraq, but that more work needs to be done in others.

What this really means, of course, is that once again, security and political benchmarks have not been met, that vast areas in Baghdad that were supposed to be under control by now are not, that a drop in violence in some areas has been met with an increase in violence elsewhere, and that political compromises are not being made with sufficient speed by the Iraqi leadership.

Nor is there any available evidence that the situation is going to change - that the escalation will suddenly become more effective next week, or next month.

Instead, all signs indicate that in September, when General Petraeus reports to Congress, he will deliver the exact same message that we are hearing today: we have to be patient.

But patience means nothing when deadlines are constantly moved. In January, a leading member of the Minority said that we would be able to tell in a few months if the escalation was working. Now, we hear that it is still too early to tell. It has been seven months. Which prediction are we supposed to believe?

As time has advanced, an absence in progress has not been met by an absence in tragedy. And at present rates, between now and September, another 200 Americans will be killed - 200 more families changed forever. And hundreds, if not thousands, more innocent Iraqis will have died as well.

We will hear today that to change our course in Iraq will signal a defeat.

But this willfully ignores the entire history of the Iraq war. After more than four years of relentless conflict - including recent months of historically high troop numbers - experts tell us that in Iraq, Al Qaeda is stronger than ever. A military official told ABC News just yesterday that, and I quote, Al Qaeda's "operational capability appears to be undiminished."

The conclusion is clear: the American military is not being given a chance to bring peace to Iraq or fight our enemies, not because our troops aren't good enough, but because their current mission is inherently flawed.

It is not weakness to admit a strategy is not working and to change it. It is the very opposite: a sign of strength. Our leaders corrected failing courses when they arose during the Civil War, and during World War II. Why should this war be different?

What Democrats are calling for today is not a retreat. It is not surrender. It is a statement that Congress will not wait for another ambiguous so-called progress report, and will not give the Administration another chance to move the goal posts.

Instead, we will refuse to needlessly sacrifice our soldiers, weaken our military, undermine our national security, and bleed our country in ways that even the worst terrorists could never dream of.

And it is a statement to the Iraqi people that they will no longer have to live as dual-victims: victims of violence, and victims of a flawed military strategy that is at best failing to bring peace to their country, and at worse perpetuating their suffering.

This bill will refocus our troops on fighting terrorists. By doing so, the disastrous strain being placed on our armed forces will be lifted without sacrificing security objectives, and their healing can begin.

Second, it will remove a strategy from the playing field that is not working, and throw open the door to new approaches which may actually succeed.

For example: this legislation requires the President to report by January on how he is engaging U.S. allies and regional powers in the effort to bring stability to Iraq. Far from abandoning the Iraqis or lessening American security, we will finally make the rehabilitation of Iraq the international priority it must become. The only thing we will be abandoning, in other words, is this Administration's mistakes.

My friends on both sides of the aisle:

Yesterday, I received an advanced copy of a report from the Defense Department's Inspector General that will be made public today. It detailed the work of some of the first companies to make armored vehicles and armored kits for our soldiers in Iraq. They were given sole-source contracts even though senior defense officials objected, favoring a competitive process instead.

The results were sadly predictable. The companies failed to meet demand, and sent critically important equipment over late. Some of the armor our soldiers were sent had cracks that had been painted over instead of fixed. In certain instances, two left doors were sent for the same vehicle. Troops already fighting a deadly foe had to use their precious time and energy to improvise and come up with ways to turn useless equipment into something that could protect them.

Our soldiers have been asked to endure terrible hardships - some of which, I am ashamed to say, have been the direct result of the practices of this Administration. And they are enduring them to this day, at this very hour.

For Congress to leave them there - to ask them to continue fighting to survive under the mounting weight of a flawed mission - that is the true definition of abandonment, M. Speaker.

And after four years, Democrats are tired of this Congress abandoning our troops to a fate they don't deserve. I would ask everyone in this chamber how they would justify this continued carnage to the families of our soldiers? With all we know now, how can we still say to the children of those killed, or to the young men and women maimed for life, your loss was needed?

We cannot. What we must say to them is this: you have given enough. It is time to come home. The American people know what must be done. A majority of this Congress knows what must be done. All that remains is for those here who are still opposed to this bill to decide that they, too, have had enough, and that they will join their countrymen in voting not with the President, but with the troops, with the people of Iraq, and with the people of the United States.